

## **New Moms Can Prevent Diabetes by Keeping Up Healthy Habits**

*By the National Diabetes Education Program*



Women who develop high blood glucose (blood sugar) levels during pregnancy are said to have gestational diabetes. These women should be tested for diabetes 6 to 12 weeks after their baby is born. In many cases their blood glucose levels show that they are no longer considered to have diabetes. But what many people don't realize is that new moms who had gestational diabetes will continue to have a greater risk for getting diabetes during their entire lifetime. So even if the test for diabetes is normal right after the baby is born, these women should continue to get tested for diabetes at least every three years.

"Many women think that if the follow-up test after the baby is born shows no signs of diabetes, they are in the clear. That is not the case," said Vivian Pinn, MD, Director of the Office of Research on Women's Health (ORWH) at the National Institutes of Health. "They continue to have a greater risk for getting diabetes in the future. The good news is that there are modest but important steps these women can take to prevent or delay developing diabetes."

Gestational diabetes occurs more often in women with a family history of diabetes, obese women and Latina, African American, American Indian, Asian, Pacific Islander, and Alaska Native women. Moms who have had gestational diabetes should be tested on a regular basis for diabetes, so it is important that they tell their doctors about their history of gestational diabetes. This follow up screening may be a simple blood test. Women who have had gestational diabetes have a 2 in 3 chance that it will return in future pregnancies so they should also talk to their obstetricians if they plan on becoming pregnant again.

Women with a history of gestational diabetes should also make an effort to reach and maintain a healthy weight by making healthy food choices and being active for at least 30 minutes, 5 days a week. Even if women do not reach their "goal" weight, research shows that maintaining a healthy lifestyle can help reduce risk. These action steps are also good for the entire family.

"Children of women who had gestational diabetes are also at risk for obesity and diabetes, so it's a good idea for mothers to let their child's doctor know that they had gestational diabetes," added Pinn. "Keeping a healthy lifestyle as a family is good for everyone. It helps both mom and baby manage their risks for getting diabetes in the future."

For a free tip sheet on gestational diabetes, including steps to reduce the risk of developing diabetes, call the National Diabetes Education Program (NDEP) at 1-888-693-NDEP (6337) or visit their website at [www.YourDiabetesInfo.org](http://www.YourDiabetesInfo.org).

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GDM - Risks to Mom

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